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DR. TARBELL'S  
CALIFORNIA GUIDE

1853.

The Newberry Library

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THE  
EMIGRANT'S GUIDE  
TO  
CALIFORNIA;  
GIVING A DESCRIPTION  
OF THE  
OVERLAND ROUTE,  
FROM THE COUNCIL BLUFFS, ON THE MISSOURI RIVER,  
BY THE SOUTH PASS, TO SACRAMENTO CITY;  
—INCLUDING—  
A TABLE OF DISTANCES  
FROM POINT TO POINT.

—ALSO—

Pointing out the Mineral Water so much to be dreaded  
by the Emigrant.

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BY DR. J. TARBELL.

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1853

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STARTING POINT:  
COUNCIL BLUFFS, ON THE MISSOURI RIVER.

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Here the emigrant can procure all the outfit necessary for the journey, such as teams, provisions, etc.

	MILES.
From Council Bluffs cross the River and follow down the bottom,	1
Ascend a high bluff and travel over rolling prairie to Pappia Creek, good grass and timber,	18      19
To Elk Horn, here you will have to ferry over your wagons but your stock can ford it,	9      28
To Platte River, plenty of grass and timber,	8      36
To Circular Lake,	4      40
To where road returns to the river,	10      50
You now leave the river and follow up the bottom, passing several small lakes to Loup Fork, good place to camp,	24      74
Looking Glass Creek, good camping,	10      84
Beaver River, 20 feet wide, 2 feet deep, a good place to camp,	6      90
Ford of Loup Fork, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile wide, 3 feet deep,	10      100
Cedar Creek, 8 rods wide, 2 feet deep, Road leaves the river and follows up a ravine and over a bluff to a small creek, bad crossing, no timber,	2      102
Upper Ford of Loup Fork,	7      109
Over Sandy Bluffs,	6      115
	5      120

Prairie Creek, bad crossing, no timber,	18	138
Smail Creek, good camping,	2	140
Wood Creek, good grass, plenty timber,	10	150
Platte River,	2	152
The road now runs up the bottom, sometimes leaving the river from 1 2 to miles, passing several small lakes and crossing small creeks with good campings to the head of		
Grand Island,	40	192
Elm Creek, plenty of timber, but little water,	3	195
Road leaves the river,	8	203
Crossing of Buffalo Creek,	3	206
Willow Lake, no wood, plenty grass,	20	226
Flat Lake, good camping,	8	234
Deep Dry Creek,	2	236
Low Sandy Bluff, extending to the river,	14	250
Skunk Creek, 6 feet wide, bad crossing,	5	255
Up Skunk Creek,	5	260
Marsh or Lake, south of the road,	1	261
Spring of cold water at the foot of the Bluffs, north of the road,	5	266
Opposite the junction of North and South Fork, roads hilly and sandy,	1	267
Canyon Creek, good grass but no timber,	4	271
Last timber on the north side of Platte,	8	279
You will find no more timber for two hundred miles, except one lone tree.		
North Bluff Fork, good water, not much grass,	11	290
Bluff Creek,	11	301
Goose Creek,	15	310
You now pass a very sandy bluff to		
Small Spring Creek,	2	318
Duck Weed Creek, good cold water,	2	320
Rattlesnake Creek, 20 feet wide, 1 foot deep,	6	326
Small Creek, land sandy, but little grass in this vicinity,	6	339

Camp Creek, 8 feet wide,	5	337
Small Creek, 3 feet wide,	4	341
Wolf Creek, 20 feet wide,	13	354
Watch Creek, 8 feet wide,	5	359
Lone Tree,	4	363
Castle Creek, 6 rods wide, swift current,	6	369

You will cross no more creeks with water in them, unless it is a wet time, until you arrive at

Crab Creek, good roads,	30	399
Small Lake, south side of the road, good place to camp,	1	400
Cross three dry creeks to the foot of Cobble Hills,	5	405
Over steep sandy bluffs to the bottom,	2	407
Up the bottom to another range of sandy Bluffs, roads smooth, but little grass,	18	425
Across the Bluffs to the bottom,	1	426
Opposite Chimney Rock, grass poor,	15	441
Along the bank of the River to Scott's Bluffs,	19	460
Spring Creek, south of the road,	4	464
Small Creek, 200 yards south of the road,	17	481

By ascending the highest Bluff, you have a view of Laramie Peak in the Black Hills, timber north side of the river. Roads very sandy balance of the way to Fort Laramie,

Raw-Hide Creek, one rod wide,	6	487
Fort Laramie,	12	499

This is a small Military Post situated on the north bank of the Laramie River, about one mile from its junction with the Platte River. Here the emigrants have crossed the Platte River and gone up the south side and recrossed near the mouth of the Sweetwater, but the best way is to keep up the north side of the Platte

River. By so doing you will avoid two ferries and have better roads. The roads now become hilly, leaving the river several times, passing through valleys of good grass and timber to the last crossing of		
Platte River,	125	624
From here the road leaves the River, you will now travel over a barren hilly country to Mineral Springs,	13	637
The water is clear, but poisonous,		
Alkali Swamps,	9	646
Here is some grass, but it is not safe to let your cattle go to it for fear of the poisonous water,		
Small Creek, left of the road, water has a bad taste but not poisonous,	4	650
Willow Springs, right of the road,	3	653
You will find a good valley of grass over the hill to the right of the road about one mile, this is a small spring of good water, no fuel but wild sage, timber now becomes scarce, you will see but little timber until you come to the Green River,		
Over a long hill to a Slough,	4	657
Very muddy and bad to cross,		
Over rough roads to Greesewood Creek,	6	663
Poor grass but plenty of sage for fuel,		
Alkali Spring,	6	669
Some grass here but dangerous to let the cattle on to it, the ground is covered with a crust of Salaratus,		
Independence Rock,	5	674
Ford of Sweetwater, 8 rods wide, 3 feet deep,	7	681
There are many pools along this river which are impregnated with Alkali, avoid them all as they are poisonous,		

do not let your stock drink any water that is not in a running stream.		
Devil's Gate,	4	685
Up the River, Crossing several creeks that are difficult to cross, grass and fuel scarce.	12	697
Road leaves the river and passes over a very sandy country to the River,	7	704
Bitter Cottonwood Creek, here are a few trees, but little grass,	5	709
Road returns to the River, By crossing the river here you will saye some rough sandy road, but will have to cross the river three times after this, before you get back to the main road, but the crossings are not diffi- cult.	6	715
Junction with the old Road,	8	723
The road here leaves the river, and you will find no good water for seventeen miles. About six from the junction, are several acres of low, swampy land, about one foot below the sur- face of which is a bed of ice about . two inches thick.		
Road returns to the River,	17	740
Cross over some points of Bluffs to the riv- er again,	5	745
Up the River, Over a succession of high rocky hills to a	5	750
Soft Swamp and a Small Creek,	8	758
You are now in a hilly, barren country, with only small patches of grass, you will find small valleys of good grass by turning off from the road and driving over the Bluffs to the right.		
Strawberry Creek, plenty of willow for fuel and small patches of grass,	4	762
Quakingasp Grove, this is a small grove of trees south of the road,	1	763

'North Fork of Sweetwater, plenty of fuel but no grass,	3	766
Willow Creek,	2	768
Sweetwater, last crossing,	5	773
By going up the Sweetwater one mile you will find good grass. You will find no good grass westward from here, until you come to Big Sandy, the country is barren and destitute of vegetation except wild sage.		
Up a long step hill over banks of snow to the Summit of the South Pass,	9	782
Pacific Springs,	3	785
Here is a clear cold spring of good wa- ter, but the ground around it is so swampy that it is dangerous for cat- tle to go near it.		
Dry Sandy,	11	796
Water brackish, plenty of wild sage for fuel but no grass,		
Fork of the Salt Lake and Sublet's Route, We will follow the road by the Salt Lake,	6	802
Little Sandy, the roads are heavy sand,	8	810
Big Sandy,	8	818
By driving up to the right of the road you will find good grass and some Cottonwood trees for fuel, here you cross the river, and travel over rough sandy roads without water or grass to Big Sandy again,	17	835
Here the ground is covered with Alkali and several small pools of Alkali wa- ter, you had better drive your cattle to the creek and let them drink, then drive to the Bluffs to camp, there are small patches of bunch grass and wild oats on the bluffs,		
Green River,	10	845

You will have to ferry this river, there are several good ferries. Plenty of timber but little grass.

Down the River,	6	851
By swimming your cattle on to a small Island there is good grass, plenty of good timber for fuel. You now leave the river and travel over a rough barren road without grass or water to		
Black's Fork, good camping,	15	866
Hams Fork,	5	871
Black's Fork second time, good grass and fuel,	12	883
Small Creek, no grass or fuel,	4	887
Over a rough barren country, without grass or water to		
Fort Bridger,	20	907
This is a small Trading Post established for the purpose of trading with the Indians, it is situated in a beautiful valley, well watered with an abundance of good grass and fuel, from here you will have no scarcity of grass, fuel or water until you leave the Salt Lake valley,		
Muddy Creek, difficult crossing,	13	920
Copperas Spring, to the left of the road at the foot of a hill,	4	924
Over a steep rough hill to a valley,	3	927
Down a ravine,	5	932
Over several steep, high mountains, the roads very rough and some places miry, the ascent and descent in many places difficult, crossing several small streams, to		
Bear River,	8	940
This is a very rapid stream with a rocky bottom, about sixty yards wide, it is fed by melting snows, the snows mel-		

ting while the sun shines and freezing at night causes the river to ebb and flow daily. If you come to the river in the morning you will find it too deep to ford, but it will fall so that you can ford it in the afternoon, there is but little grass in this valley, but plenty of timber.

Up the valley to good grass and water,	3	943
Yellow Creek, bad crossing,	7	950
Over a mountain and down a ravine to Echo Creek,	6	956
About one fourth of a mile to the right of the road at the first crossing, there is a large cave in the side of the bluff, you will travel down this creek twenty-five miles, crossing it nineteen times, some of the crossings very miry, with steep banks to		
To Weber River,	25	981
Down Weber River to the Ford,	4	985
This stream is not fordable until late in the season, there is a ferry kept by the Mormons.		
Up a deep ravine to the summit of a Mountain,	6	991
The descent is rough and sideling to a small Creek,	2	993
Canyan Creek,	3	996
Up Canyon Creek,	8	1004
Crossing it eleven times, many places steep banks and miry.		
Turn to the right and ascend a high mountain,	4	1008
The ascent of this mountain is very rough and many places steep, it is covered with a heavy growth of timber and on the north side; banks of snow. From the summit you have a		

view of the south end of the Salt Lake valley.

Foot of the mountain, descent very steep and rough,	2	1010
Down the Creek,	4	1014
Over a high steep Mountain to last Creek,	6	1020
Down the Creek, crossing it 17 times,	5	1025

When you leave the creek you rise a gentle hill from the top of which you have a view of the Salt Lake, its valleys, surrounding mountains and the Mormon city.

City of the great Salt Lake,	5	1030
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From the city the road turns north and keeps near the foot of the mountain for about eighty miles, the first fifty miles you will travel in thick settlements, where you will have a good opportunity to trade your teams for fresh ones, also procure provisions such as Beef, Flour, Chickens, Eggs, Butter, Cheese, etc.

To Boiling Spring,	2	1032
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From here you will have good grass for the first fifty miles, then barren to Bear River.

Willow Spring,	6	1038
Clear Creek,	8	1046
Beaver River, 4 rods wide, 3 feet deep,	21	1067
Ogden River,	3	1070
Bitter Cottonwood Creek,	18	1088
Box Alder Creek,	4	1092
Large Pool, 20 rods to the left of the road,	10	1102
Bear River Ferry, grass poor, no fuel,	10	1112

From here you will find no good water for thirty-two miles.

Muddy Creek, water not good,	2	1114
Salt Springs, brackish water, but not poisonous,	20	1134

Sink Creek, good grass, no fuel,	10	1144
Deep Creek,	6	1150
Keep up the creek to the Sink,	6	1156
No water after this for ten miles.		
Pilot Springs,	10	1166
You now travel along the foot of the mountain to a		
Spring in a ravine to the left of the road,	6	1172
You will now travel along the foot of the mountain, crossing several streams fed by melting snow		
To Cassus Creek,	8	1180
Up Cassus Creek,	2	1182
No water after leaving Cassus Creek for 8 miles,		
Junction of Salt Lake and Sublett's Route,	5	1187
You will gradually descend into a large valley, well watered and abundance of good grass and timber.		
Summit of a Mountain,	7	1194
From here the road is descending for five miles, many places rough, steep and siding.		
Small Creek at the foot of the Mountain,	5	1199
Goose Creek,	2	1201
Up Goose Creek to the mouth of a ravine,	18	1219
Travel up this ravine three miles and then cross it, after this you will find but little grass and no water for fifteen miles, roads rough and hilly,		
Thousand Spring Valley,	18	1237
This valley is thirty-five miles long, well watered and in many places good grass, there are several hot springs and some alkali water which will injure your cattle.		
Head of the Valley,	35	1272
Over several hills to a small Creek,	10	1282
Valley Spring,	8	1290

Prairie Creek, abundance of grass;	10	1300
Canyon Creek, a tributary of Humbolt,	4	
Humbolt River,	6	1306

You will follow down this river to the Sink, the roads are the most of the way heavy sand, and many places rough and hilly. You will have to ford this river many times, the fordings are difficult, owing to the banks being steep and miry. There are many pools of standing water that is impregnated with alkali that will make it necessary to be careful of your stock, also the Indians are thieveish along this river, grass is good for the first one hundred miles. There is no fuel but willow and sage,

North Fork of Hunb bolt, good fording,	20	1326
Over the point of three bluffs to the river,	7	1333
Down the river bottom to the foot of a bluff,	20	1353

Ascend and travel over a succession of barren bluffs, destitute of grass or wa-  
ter to

Small Creek,	12	1365
Small Creek, good water,	4	1379
You will travel over a succession of barren hills to the River,	12	1381
Cross a high bluff and travel down the bottom to the River,	10	1391
Small Creek, good grass,	9	1400
Point of the Bluffs,	7	1407

The country now becomes very barren, the roads heavy and sandy, the water in the river begins to taste of Alkali, grass is only found in patches, the sun pours down its intense heat, the dust forms a heavy cloud, the cattle becomes so jaded that they, require constant urging to keep them moving,

and the murmur is often heard to escape the lips of the toil worn traveler,  
"Had I realized what I now see before me I would remained satisfied in my peaceful home."

The road now follows down the river, crossing several sandy deserts, leaving and returning to the river at intervals until you come to the great meadow or

Grazing Ground,

170 1577

Here are several thousand acres of good grass. Emigrants resort here to recruit their cattle and cut hay for the desert, there being but little grass for seventy miles. If you should happen here in a dry time, take in a supply of water, for the water at the Sink becomes brackish, when the river gets low. You will now follow down the river with sandy roads to the

Sink of the Humbolt,

23 1600

Let your cattle drink but little water at the sink, as it will weaken them so much that they will not be able to perform the journey across the desert, you will find the water more pure in the middle of the lake where there is a current. The first thirty miles across the desert the roads are level and smooth but the last twelve miles is extremely sandy.

Carson River,

42 1642

No grass on this for five miles, you will then find good grass and timber, Road leaves the River, rough hilly country, destitute of grass or water.

Road returns to the River,

7 1649

Here the road leaves the river again

and you will find no grass or water for twenty-five miles. The whole distance the roads are rough and heavy sand.

Road returns to the River,                            25 1674

No grass when you come to the river,  
but by going up two miles you will  
find tall grass and timber,

You now follow up the River,                            10 1684  
Cross the River.

Here you leave the river and ascend a  
high steep bluff and travel over a bar-  
ren country with rough roads and no  
water.

Road returns to the River,                            12 1696

Drive up the river two miles to good  
grass. You are now in Carson valley,  
it is forty miles long, the road keeps  
along the foot of the mountain. These  
mountains are covered with a heavy  
growth of tall pines. You will cross a  
number of small streams and on your  
left there is a heavy growth of grass.  
The first thirty miles the roads are  
good, the rest of the way to the Can-  
yon, hilly and rough.

Mouth of Big Canyon,                                    40 1736

You will now have eight miles of the  
worst road on the journey. It is en-  
closed on both sides by high rocky  
cliffs, the stream comes rushing down  
from the mountains, roaring like a  
cataract. The road is so very rocky  
that it is difficult in many places to  
get along with a wagon.

Head of the Canyon, good grass and fuel,            8 1744

You will now find grass scarce to Sacra-  
mento City.

Foot of the first ridge of the Sierra Nevada    12 1756

You now ascend a steep rough mountain which is about one mile to the summit, the descent sideling and rough to a valley at the		
Foot of the Second Ridge,	6	1762
You now have a very sidelings ascent, and many places very rocky, near the summit there are immense banks of snow.		
Summit,	4	1766
You will now find rough hilly roads, with good water but little grass to		
Leek Springs, good grass down the valley,	23	1789
Your main dependence now for food to the Sacramento valley, will be oak leaves, you will have plenty of good water, roads growing better to		
Placerville, here you enter the mines,	34	1823
Over high rough hills to		
Diamond Springs, no grass, good water, Sacramento City, good roads but little grass,	4	1827
	46	1873

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## ROUTE BY SUBLETT'S AND GREENWOOD CUT OFF.

Little Sandy, good place to camp,	5	
Big Sandy, good grass but no fuel,	6	11
From here no water and but little grass for fifty miles, good road.		
Green River,	50	61
From here to the junction of the Salt Lake road you will find grass plenty.		
Bear Creek, road hilly,	4	65
Ford of Bear Creek,	6	71
Deep Ravine,	4	75
Branch of Colorado, roads very hilly,	.18	93
You will cross several streams in this distance.		

Poplar Grove,	7	100
Bear River, roads hilly,	14	114
Thulick's Fork,	14	128
Bear River Valley,	10	138
Small Creek,	8	146
Small Creek,	13	159
Small Creek,	4	163
Small Creek,	33	196
You will cross several small streams in this distance.		
Soda Spring,	3	199
You now have a good road, with good camping to		
Junction of Salt Lake Road,	110	309

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#### REMARKS—TEAM AND OTHER OUTFIT.

One hundred and forty-six days experience in crossing the Plains, with an ox team, gave the Author an opportunity to form a correct opinion of what kind of a team is most suitable for the journey and also what other outfit is necessary to take. In the first place, I consider ox teams the most safe, being better adapted to the feed found on the journey.

A Mule team is considered more hardy, consequently better able to stand the journey than Horses, but a horse team with care in selecting good sound horses of the largest size, with a careful driver, will perform the trip, and is a much more pleasant team than oxen or mules.

The great difficulty is overloading and overdriving at the start. If you start several hundred miles east of the Missouri River, it is advisable to only start with sufficient provision to last to Council Bluffs, as at that or any other point of crossing of the Missouri, the merchants have a large supply of provisions that can be obtained on reasonable terms, for as you are under the necessity of starting at a time when the roads are muddy, you are liable to break down your teams at the

start, and all such will most certainly fail to perform the journey.

Take light wagons, and whether you take oxen, Mules or Horses, the largest are the best. Load light. Three men are as many as should go with one team. Have your horses or mules well shod, and take one set of shoes and nails with you. Oxen, if you keep up the north side of the Platte, do not need shoeing.

I will now give what I consider an outfit for three men, with an ox team.

One Light Two Horse Wagon,  
Four Yoke of Oxen,

	POUNDS.
Flour and Meal, per man, 150 lbs.	450
Hard Bread, per man, 50 lbs.,	150
Bacon, this should be Sides,	300
Dried Apples,	50
Sugar,	100
Coffee,	25
Rice,	15
Beans,	25
Tea,	1
One Rifle, (large bore)	20
Six Mackinaw Blankets,	35
Fine Salt,	4
Salaratus,	5
One Sheetiron Cooking Stove, with plates, tin cups, knives and forks, etc.	50
<hr/>	
	1230

If you go with horses or mules you should have two to each man. As mules or horses will perform the trip in twenty or twenty-five days less time than oxen, one sixth less provisions will be sufficient. The time of starting will depend on the season, make it a point to leave the Missouri as soon as there is grass for your teams. Drive slow; the old adage is applicable, "haste makes waste." Keep cool and let your moderation be the predominating principle, and you are ensured a safe but tedious journey.



